

August 25, 2022
Eden Bloom, Testimony
Oversight Committee's Environment Subcommittee
Congressional Field Hearing, Detroit

Good morning. I would like to thank the Environmental Subcommittee for this opportunity. I would also like to recognize the environmental justice neighborhoods throughout the city of Detroit. My name is Eden Bloom. My family and I live in the impact area of the Stellantis Detroit Assembly Complex. I also serve as the Public Education and Media Manager for Detroit People's Platform. DPP is a Black woman-led org that has been active since 2013. Part of my work is organizing for better outcomes for Detroiters impacted by large public funded projects like Stellantis.

Last year, our oldest who is in middle school, wrote Governor Gretchen Whitmer about living near a paint plant. In the letter he asks; "have you ever smelt paint fumes? Have you been outside for too long that you can't breathe? Do you know what it is to suffer? Well, the Beniteau residents do. The FCA plant creates Jeeps. It's a big plant and people are suffering, especially on the streets closest to the plant."

As a parent, when it was announced that we'd be living near a paint plant my initial thoughts were what it would mean for our 3 kids: for their development and life expectancy. An article from Planet Detroit answered some of my concerns. It reads, "Residents in the neighborhoods around Stellantis suffer a high number of serious asthma cases, and **some suspect the high pollution levels are linked to a life expectancy of 67.8 years**, which is among the state's lowest. Residents 20 miles north are expected to live nearly 87 years." The article goes on to share that those born in Oakland County on average live nearly 10 years longer than Detroiters. Source: <https://planetdetroit.org/2021/06/a-tale-of-two-census-tracts-why-do-people-live-longer-in-west-bloomfield-than-on-detroits-east-side/>

I think about what that means for my family constantly, but I'm also horrified for our neighbors who live right up on the plant. Our neighborhood is 94% Black and I'm concerned about those who have more formidable health issues and, due to the extreme poverty prevalent in Detroit, have less resources to try and manage or mitigate their exposure.

I have attended every public hearing and one of the most frustrating and counter intuitive aspects of this process has been EGLE's compartmentalization the project from the people. After the first few public hearings it became apparent that EGLE couldn't hear us. EGLE's website reads, "*Some issues EGLE cannot consider include popularity of the action, emission sources that are not part of the action, indoor air pollution, traffic, hours of operation, noises and lighting, and zoning issues.*" How is it possible for our state regulators to protect frontline communities they can't see or hear? The parameters they have established to make their decisions also become a justification for their abuse.

They can't consider that in the U.S., Black children suffer disproportionately from asthma, and are seven to eight times more likely to die of asthma than white children. The fact that

communities of color face nearly 40% more exposure to toxic air pollution than white communities is not just lost on EGLE, it can't be heard. I wonder what would have happened if EGLE would have listened to concerns raised in their hearings. Would they have looked more closely at the ventilation plans? Maybe these air quality violations would have been averted.

In addition to these health issues and the injustice baked into the permitting process, it is vital that we recognize the Stellantis Detroit Assembly Complex as a public funded project. It is unconscionable that Stellantis, the fifth-largest automaker in the world with a reported net profit of \$8 billion in the first half of this year, has accessed nearly half a billion dollars in local and state tax incentives, abatements and tax capture AND is having a detrimental impact on residents. **The project will capture \$93 million in local and school taxes generated at the site over the next 30 years.** The economic impact of the project on our tax revenue is long term.

Source: <https://www.craigslist.com/economic-development/tax-incentives-fca-plants-southeast-michigan-may-top-400-million>

This extensive use of Brownfield TIFs in the Stellantis project is reflected in economic development projects across the city. This appears productive in a post-industrial city, but **Brownfield-funded redevelopment, while cleaning up the site for developers can create new environmental and health risks, new frontline communities and subsequently the displacement of long-term Black and Brown residents.** Neighbors are made to live through increased truck traffic, diesel emissions, fugitive dust and potential damage from construction. Depending on the use of the facility, these issues can be long term.

One final note on Stellantis' and other manufacturers shift toward the production of electric vehicles (EV). While the Inflation Reduction Act strives to address environmental and climate concerns, based upon residents' experience here on the east side, there needs to be more intentionality. Alternatives to aspects of production that contribute to climate change, like the paint process, must be implemented. There is also concern over the raw materials required for EV battery manufacturing and the storage and disposal of waste. Without intentionally the opportunities of the Inflation Reduction Act could replicate rather than reduce frontline communities.

To conclude, in addition to this increased pollution Detroiters are living through extreme weather and flooding due to climate change. It is disturbing that funds and resources that could be budgeted toward infrastructure repair and improvements have been used to finance a project that is hurting everyday Detroiters. Decision makers approved this project based upon economic promises and flawed engineering models rather than health, economic and climate reality of **Detroiters who are now being made to live in and through violation after violation.**

Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your efforts to address the injustices presented and discussed here today.